CHAPTER 35

Cool CSS Positioning Tips and Tricks

In This Chapter

Creating columns of text

Superimposing text and graphics

Creating pull quotes

In this chapter, you see more CSS positioning tricks. Specifically, you learn how to lay out your page in ways that simply weren't possible before CSS. You learn how to create newspaper columns. You see how (finally!) you can superimpose text over graphics to title your image or to annotate your image. You also learn how to create pull quotes. This chapter assumes you have read (and understood) all previous chapters about CSS.

Creating Columns of Text

You can use CSS to create columns of text. For a brief moment in time, one draft of the CSS2 specification included a property for real newspaper columns. It enabled you to create text columns that dynamically resized themselves to fit on the page. It decided how much of the text should go in the first column and how much should go in subsequent columns, so each column was the same length. Unfortunately, this property (called `columns`), along with a host of related properties that permitted customization of columns, has been dropped from the CSS2 specification. It is being considered, under the catchy name *Multi-column layout in CSS*, for inclusion in CSS3, the next version of CSS, which is still in working draft on a component-by-component basis.

Fortunately, you can still create columns of text with CSS, but you simply must do more of the work yourself. To create columns of text, use the `DIV` element (you will recall this is

used to format and group multiple block-level elements). You also need most of the following properties in your style sheet:

- **width.** This property tells the browser how wide to make each column. You can use a percentage or a value. Generally, using a percentage is safer, in case the browser window isn't open in full-screen mode.
- **float.** This property puts the text column either on the right or the left. Even though the only official values available to you for this property are right, left, or none, Internet Explorer does support a center value for this property.
- **border.** If you want to put a border between your columns of text, you can use one or more of the border properties to do this.
- **margin.** You might need either margins or padding to format your text columns to your satisfaction.
- **padding.** Padding can help provide white space between the column of text and the border, if you use one.
- **text-align.** You can use the text-align property to fully justify your text, so neither the left nor the right edge of the text is jagged. If you want the text to look like newspaper text, you definitely want to set text-align to justify.

Figure 35-1 shows two sample columns created using CSS.

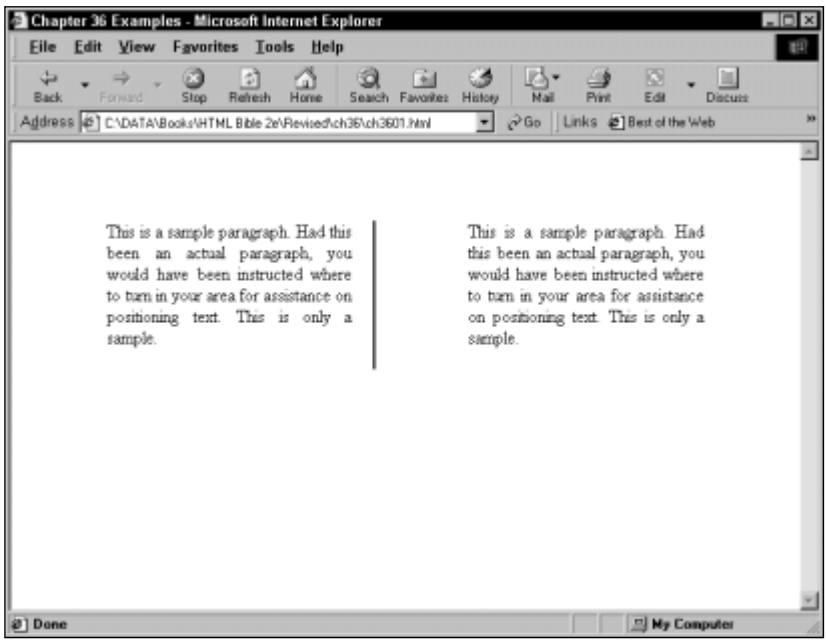

Chapter 36 Examples - Microsoft Internet Explorer
File Edit View Favorites Tools Help
Back Forward Stop Refresh Home Search Favorites History Mail Print Edit Discuss
Address C:\DATA\Books\HTML Bible 2e\Revised\ch36\ch3601.html
Go Links Best of the Web
This is a sample paragraph. Had this been an actual paragraph, you would have been instructed where to turn in your area for assistance on positioning text. This is only a sample.
This is a sample paragraph. Had this been an actual paragraph, you would have been instructed where to turn in your area for assistance on positioning text. This is only a sample.
Done
My Computer

Figure 35-1: Creating text columns with CSS

The HTML used to create these columns is simple:

```
<BODY>
<H1>Chapter 35 Examples</H1>
<DIV class="left"><P>This is a sample paragraph. Had this been
an actual paragraph, you would have been instructed where to
turn in your area for assistance on positioning text. This is
only a sample.<P></DIV>
<DIV class="right"><P>This is a sample paragraph. Had this been
an actual paragraph, you would have been instructed where to
turn in your area for assistance on positioning text. This is
only a sample.<P></DIV>
</BODY>
```

The CSS used to create the columns is a bit more interesting:

```
DIV.left {
        width: 40%;
        text-align: Justify;
        float: left;
        padding-right: 0.3in;
        border-right: solid thin;
        margin-left: 1cm;
}
DIV.right {
        width: 40%;
        text-align: Justify;
        float: right;
        padding-left: 0.25in;
        margin-right: 1cm;
}
```

Notice only the left column has a border. You could just as easily have put the border on the left-hand side of the right column. In either case, you must be careful not to use the margin property to create white space on the side on which you have the border. Use padding on that side instead (remember, the border is drawn between the margin and the padding).

Netscape 4.7 doesn't support this implementation of the `float` property.

Superimposing Text and Graphics

The `z-index` property, mentioned briefly in Chapter 33, is just the ticket for layering text and graphics, only text, or only graphics. In Figure 35-2, the `z-index` property is used to superimpose text — in this case, a caption on an image.

Chapter 36 Examples - Netscape
File Edit View Go Communicator Help
Back Forward Reload Home Search Netscape Print Security Shop Stop
Bookmarks Location: file:///C|/DATA/Books/HTML Bible 2e/Revised/ch36/ch3602.html
What's Related
This team's rims provided by:
Makes you want to buy some, eh?
Document: Done

Figure 35-2: Text superimposed on a graphic

Again, the HTML is simple:

```
<BODY>
<H1>This Team's rims provided by: </H1>
<img class="under" src="fir.gif" width=200 height=150 alt="FiR
logo" border="0">
<P class="over">Makes you want to buy some, eh?</P>
</BODY>
```

The CSS uses the `z-index` property, which layers the element with the lower `z-index` value on top of elements with higher `z-index` values.

```
IMG.under {
       position: absolute;
       top: 10;
       left: 20;
       z-index: 300;
}
P.over {
       position: absolute;
       z-index: 100;
       font-size: 18pt;
```

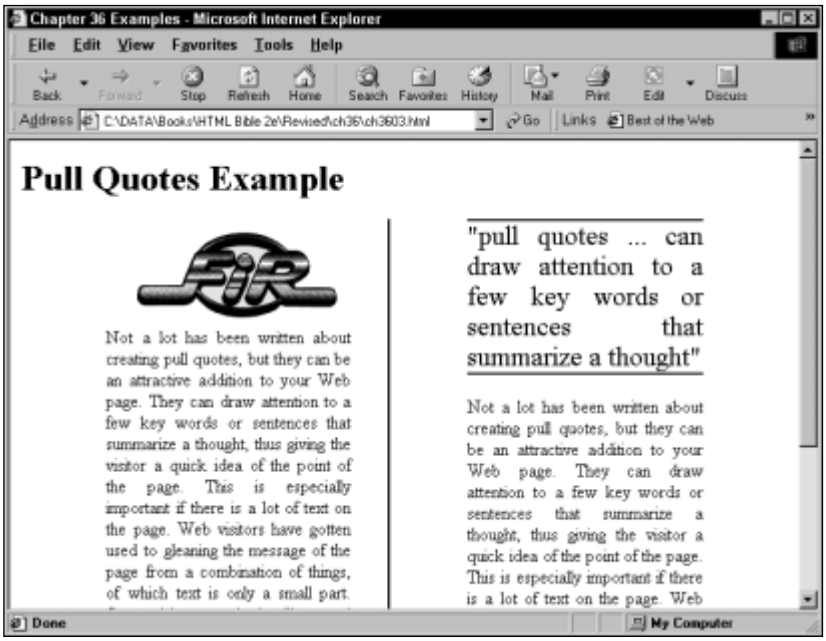
```
        font-family: sans-serif;
        top: 100;
        left: 20;
        color: Fuchsia;
}
```

The z-index property is not implemented in Internet Explorer 5.

Creating Pull Quotes

Not much has been written about creating pull quotes, but they can be an attractive addition to your Web page. *Pull quotes* can draw attention to a few key words or sentences that summarize a thought, thus giving the visitor a quick idea of the point of the page. This is especially important if a lot of text is on the page. Web visitors have become used to gleaning the message of the page from a combination of things, of which text is only a small part. Some visitors won't sit still to read an entire page of text unless you can grab them with a snappy quote. Pull quotes can do this for you.

Figure 35-3 shows an effective use of columns and pull quotes together.


Chapter 36 Examples - Microsoft Internet Explorer
File Edit View Favorites Tools Help
Back Forward Stop Refresh Home Search Favorites History Mail Print Edit Discuss
Address C:\DATA\Books\HTML Bible 2e\Revised\ch36\ch3603.html
Go Links Best of the Web
Pull Quotes Example
Not a lot has been written about creating pull quotes, but they can be an attractive addition to your Web page. They can draw attention to a few key words or sentences that summarize a thought, thus giving the visitor a quick idea of the point of the page. This is especially important if there is a lot of text on the page. Web visitors have gotten used to gleaning the message of the page from a combination of things, of which text is only a small part.
"pull quotes ... can draw attention to a few key words or sentences that summarize a thought"
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Done
My Computer

Figure 35-3: Pull quotes used in combination with columns

The HTML, as you've become used to seeing, is simple:

```
<BODY>
<H1>Pull Quotes Example</H1>
<DIV class="left"><IMG class="icon" src="fir.gif">
<P>Not a lot has been written about creating pull quotes, but
they can be an attractive addition to your Web page. They can
draw attention to a few key words or sentences that summarize a
thought, thus giving the visitor a quick idea of the point of
the page. This is especially important if there is a lot of
text on the page. Web visitors have gotten used to gleaning the
message of the page from a combination of things, of which text
is only a small part. Some visitors won't sit still to read an
entire page of text unless you can grab them with a snappy
quote. Pull quotes can do that for you.</P></DIV>
<DIV class="right">
<P class="pull">"pull quotes ... can draw attention to a few
key words or sentences that summarize a thought"</P>
<P>Not a lot has been written about creating pull quotes, but
they can be an attractive addition to your Web page. They can
draw attention to a few key words or sentences that summarize a
thought, thus giving the visitor a quick idea of the point of
the page. This is especially important if there is a lot of
text on the page. Web visitors have gotten used to gleaning the
message of the page from a combination of things, of which text
is only a small part. Some visitors won't sit still to read an
entire page of text unless you can grab them with a snappy
quote. Pull quotes can do that for you.</P></DIV>
</BODY>
```

The CSS is more complicated:

```
DIV.left {
       width: 35%;
       text-align: Justify;
       float: left;
       padding-right: 0.2in;
       border-right: solid thin;
       margin-left: 1cm;
}
DIV.right {
       width: 45%;
       text-align: Justify;
       float: right;
       padding-left: 0.3in;
       margin-right: 1cm;
}
IMG.icon {
       float: left;
       margin-left: .2in;
       margin-right: .2in;
}
P.pull {
```

```
        font: 18pt Helvetica blue;
        border-top: thin blue solid;
        border-bottom: thin blue solid;
}
```

The `DIV.left` and `DIV.right` rules should look familiar. The `IMG.icon` rule also has nothing new. Notice the CSS for the pull class of the `P` element doesn't use any advanced CSS properties. Notice, too, the float value of the `DIV.left` rule is *left*. Also notice the `float` property of the `IMG.icon` rule is *left*. Because the `DIV` element contains the `IMG` element (in the previous HTML), this means you can float an element within another floated element.

None of this works in Netscape 4.7, due to its lack of support for the `float` element. Figure 35-4 shows how Netscape handles this example.

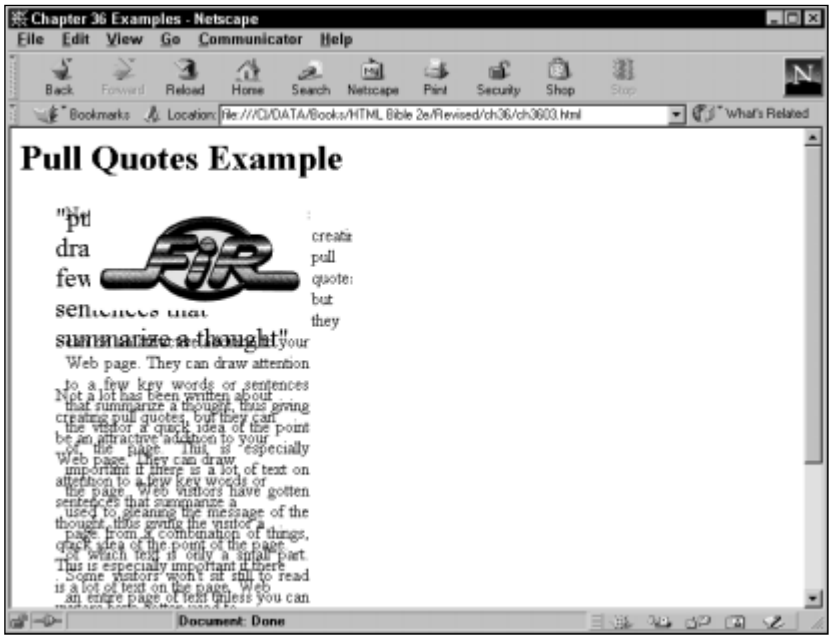
Chapter 36 Examples - Netscape
File Edit View Go Communicator Help
Back Forward Reload Home Search Netscape Print Security Shop Stop
Bookmarks Location: file:///C|/DATA/Books/HTML Bible 2e/Revised/ch36/ch3603.html
What's Related
Pull Quotes Example
Document: Done

Figure 35-4: Netscape's lack of support for the float property leaves this page unintelligible.

From Here

Go to Chapter 39 to learn to design Imagemaps.

Jump to Chapter 47 for an introduction to Dynamic HTML.

Proceed to Chapter 37 and begin creating still graphics for the Web.

Summary

This chapter has given you some ideas of the interesting ways you can use the CSS properties you learned in the previous chapters. It introduced layering of text and graphics with the `z-index` property. It showed you how to create text columns with the `width` and `float` properties. It also demonstrated how to create pull quotes to draw attention to a phrase or sentence from a body of text. You are now fully armed to write CSS. Part VI shows you how to add sensory excitement and interactivity.

✦ ✦ ✦